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Chapter III

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE KOLS

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Within the Kol tribe there are numerous subdivisions which are generally called *kurhis*, and occasionally *gotras*, though there is no trace of any exogamous clans. On the whole these groups are endogamous although hypergamy is sometimes practised, especially when no suitable mate from the same *kurhi* is available. There are certain restrictions in connection with food, and members of one *kurhi* will usually not take food with those of another

When questioned about *kurhis* and their number the answer has invariably been, seven; but when asked to list the seven there has been a great variety of answers and no two sets have ever agreed.[1] There seems to be considerable confusion in the minds of the Kols themselves and there is apparently no standard list.

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The Main Divisions or Kurhis. Investigations as to the number, kinds and nature of the *kurhis* were carried out in a number of centres. In general the procedure was to get a group of Kols together and during the talks ask them about the *kurhis* and their names. The findings have been tabulated in the order of frequency. Twenty-one groups were consulted and the number following the name is the number of times a particular group was given. It will be noted that only the Rautiya *kurhi* occurs in all cases.

Rautiya	21	Kulmangan	3
Thakuriya	18	Swasaha	4
Rautel	11	Bhumiya	4
Kurha	11	Murha	3
Binj	9	Gunj	2
Garhvariya	8	Kabiriya	2
Khangar	8	Narchhila	2
Kathautiya	7	Bhariya	1
Mawasi	6	Borowar	1
Kathariya	5	Maubhaiya	1
Khairwar	5	Pawai	1

In the light of these investigations a considerable boiling down

1 This same seven-fold classification occurs among other groups which actually have many more divisions. See for example G. W. Briggs' The Chamars, pp. 31, 32.

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of this list is possible. When the list as a whole was presented to a large and representative Kol group it was asserted that certain of the names on this list were not true Kols; Khangar, Murha, Kabiriya, Khairwar and Narchhila were mentioned, but they did not know what to say about Binj and Gunj, and professed to have never heard about them. It was claimed that Rautel, Kurha, Kathautiya, Kathariya and Kalmangan were all forms of the Rautiya *kurhi*; they had heard of most of them, but had never actually seen all of them. Narchhila was said to be a group of Chamars. This confusion is no doubt due to the fact that other groups have been absorbed into the Kol community and have perpetuated names which are still current in spite of the mixture.

Of the twenty-two names collected from the Kols, Russell and Hiralal have only seven of their thirteen in common with ours. It is not unlikely that some of the names mentioned above are not actual Kols and in the following pages comments on each of the so-called *kurhis* will indicate certain conclusions. Rautiya Kols usually consider themselves the highest of the *kurhis*, although it was frequently noted that individuals from other groups also made the same claim.

William Crooke gives the following list of "endogamous septs", a list based on investigations in southern United Provinces and representing conditions about 1890, over fifty years ago.

1.	Rautiya or Rautele Dahait or villagers Mahtiyan or leader (These are subdivisions)	
2.	Thakuriya	.. "a lord"
3.	Banaj	..
4.	Pahariya	.. "mountaineer"
5.	Barwar	.. "descendant from the fig (bar) tree"
6.	Bin	.. (or Binds?)
7.	Harwariya	.. "ploughman"
8.	Rajwariya	.. (from Bengal Rajwars?)
9.	Hanriyanwa	.. "people of the cooking pot"[1]

An examination of this list and its comparison with the one which we obtained shows that there are some common divisions, while some of the others may also be identical. There is exact agreement in the case of the Rautiya and Thakuriya *kurhis*, though the subdivisions of the Rautiyas do not bear much resemblance. Barwar is probably the

1. Crooke, W., *Tribes and Castes of the North West Provinces and Oudh*, Vol. III., Article Kol.

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Rs. 4-8-0 per 1,000 tiles molded and put on the rack to harden. They told us that the average Kol worker would mold about 1,000 tiles per week.

In Panagar there are about 100 families of Kols. Some of them keep chickens and sell the few eggs they get in the local bazaar, or even take them to Jubbulpore on market days. Three or four own bullock carts. The rest of the community divide their time between working on the roads and doing coolie work in the fields when such work is available. This brings them from two to three annas per day. This work is far from steady, being largely seasonal.

In Benda village there are fifteen houses of Kols. Their main work is breaking stone for the metalled roads and preparing limestone for the kilns. They believe that by steady work they can make up to Rs. three per week, but the work is very hard and the hours are long. A few collect *tendu* leaves in season and when other work is slack they go out to the jungles and cut wood. They can earn from three to three and a half annas per day in that way. None of the Benda Kols does any farming.

At Salavara village on the Gaur River, we found that all were engaged in breaking stones for road metal. Their report seemed to indicate that they had to work harder for what they got than some other groups. They said it took them fifteen days to break a *saikara*—a stone measuring approximately 1,000 cubic feet—that two men were required and that they received Rs. 2-8-0 for the *saikara*. Five years ago, they said, they got Rs. 4/- for the same measure. They claim that the work is also harder now as they have to go further for suitable rock.

At Garha close to Jubbulpore, there is a fair-sized Kol community. The village is quite distinct from any other place and about 100 Kol families dwell there. Their occupations are various, and but few have steady work. This group consists mostly of coolies who get work wherever it is available or where the best wages are offered. Sawing wood is a common opening as they do not live far from the timber yards where all the sawing of planks is done by hand. During the wheat harvest they are nearly all away in the fields, leaving their houses empty for the few weeks of the harvesting season.

On a preliminary visit to Rewa State we went to a small Kol community not far from Rewa City. These Kols have considerable land for which they pay rental to a Mahratta landlord. What this group told us has been confirmed by many others, both in and out of Rewa State and seems to characterize the conditions of the Kols there. One informant told us that he was married about twelve years pre-

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566 426 [124] viously, at which time he incurred a debt of Rs. fourteen for the expenses of the wedding. This was borrowed from a *Thakur* of a near-by village who appeared most glad to lend it to him. Ever since that day this *Thakur* has considered him as his serf, and he is supposed to go daily to him; and even though he has worked for the *Thakur* for the past twelve years he has not cleared the debt and does not believe that he ever will. He is virtually a slave of this man, is on call at any time, and must give him the first work until he no longer requires him. For each day's work the *Thakur* will give him 1½ *seers* of *chana* (usually *Dolichos lablab*) or perhaps the same amount of barley still in the head. Money was never given, nor rice or wheat. This group of Kols in Rewa was a very intelligent one on the whole, but indicated that Rewa State was not a place where one could get more than just [538] the necessary food. As one expressed it: "In Rewa there is no stomach hunger, only money hunger." This appeared to be quite a common expression over a wide area. Food was available there, but no money for the other necessities of life nor for weddings, burials and the like.

339 464 434 In centres like Kymore and Katni where there are large cement works, the majority of the coolies employed in the many types of manual labour are Kols. The work is very hard and the wages are low: usually not more than four annas a day for males and three annas for female workers.

434 [423] [162] Kharara Ghat, the isolated Kol village, is perhaps as independent economically as any Kol group studied by us. It was previously noted that this village controls about eighty acres of land. They say that ordinarily they do not sell the farm products, rather keeping them for the use of the village as well as holding a small reserve for emergencies. The village contains about 135 adult persons and the land farmed takes care of their food. Money for other needs is gained 222 276 434 438 in many ways: during the months of May and June the leaves of the *tendu* tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) are picked for use in the *biri* manufacture. The leaves are gathered in the early morning or the evenings, and in the heat of the day the people sit under the trees or on the verandas of their houses and arrange the leaves in bundles of one hundred each, tying them with fibre. These bundles are then sold to contractors at the rate of four annas per hundred bundles. Prices vary somewhat according to the quality and the demand. The Kharara Ghat folk claim that they earn from Rs. 400 to 500 per year from the sale of these leaves.

434 313 Kharara Ghat has other sources of income. The village is situated on a jungly section on the edge of the reserved forest. Wood is